

# Mill quickly issues alert on venting of gases

## Evergreen schools report no problems

By **ERIK ROBINSON**  
*Columbian staff writer*

The Georgia-Pacific Corp. paper mill in Camas vented a small amount of noncondensable gases early Tuesday afternoon, prompting the mill to warn nearby schools and businesses.

Officials with the Evergreen and Camas school districts reported taking no unusual actions related to the release.

"It was business as usual," Camas schools Superintendent Milt Dennison said.

Carolyn McGreevy, spokeswoman for the mill, said the release began about 12:45 p.m., and mill officials notified a call list of school districts and businesses within eight minutes. They also notified nearby high-tech companies, which also produce noncondensable gases and might have otherwise mistaken the mill's odor for their own.

"There's a possibility that people may notice an odor," McGreevy said.

It marked the first time the mill had put into effect a new notification procedure developed in the wake of previous releases, the most recent on Nov. 18. Evergreen School District officials criticized the mill for failing to promptly notify neighbors of a seven-minute release of noncondensable gases shortly before students arrived at Fisher's Landing Elementary School, about four miles away.

District officials were especially sensitive after a previous release, in February 2001, sickened 52 students at Fisher's Landing.

After the last release, Georgia-Pacific put into place a procedure to notify a call list of school officials, mill managers and emergency dispatchers for any release longer than 2 minutes.

State Department of Ecology spokeswoman Sandy Howard said the mill reported a power failure, which led to the venting of noncondensable gases on Tuesday. Howard said the mill also reported a small release of chlorine dioxide used in the bleaching of pulp, but not enough to threaten public health or the environment.

"In the scheme of incidents that have happened at that mill, we considered this pretty minor," Howard said. "The mill's doing a good job of notifying the community."

Carol Fenstermacher, spokeswoman for Evergreen School District, said students and staff noticed an odor Tuesday afternoon. Alerted by the mill, maintenance workers were able to circulate fresh air through the building. "It worked exactly the way it was supposed to this time," she said.